



## AS WAS SPOKEN BY THE GODS

By Adachi  
Kinnosuke



**A**DACHI KINNOSE, the writer of "As Was Spoken by the Gods," is a samurai of the noble blood who ever went into voluntary exile in order that he might win for himself and for Japan a place in the literature of a foreign land. Only son of one of the warrior nobles who relinquished sword and lands at the command of his sovereign when that miracle of history known as "The Disarming of the Samurai" attracted the attention of the whole world to the Island Kingdom, he was reared on traditions of the ancient glory of his race. To preserve that glory in the literature of the western world became the dream of his youth as it is the achievement of his manhood.

Educated to the highest degree in his own country, he took a post-graduate course in one of the American universities solely that he might find the open door into the realm of American literature. He has found it. People who know the touch of truth and of art in fiction are very likely to be acquainted with a volume of short stories that bears the name of Adachi Kinnosuke—love stories delicate as cherry blossoms; war stories that embody the Yamato Damashi in the clash of steel and shriek of shot and shell. It is called "Iroka."

"As Was Spoken by the Gods," written for this paper, blends the spirit of ancient and modern Japan as can be done only by one who embodies both.

By ADACHI KINNOSE.

**W**HEN Rome was at the breast of a kindly wolf on the Tiber, when Christianity was yet unborn in the purple haze days of the gods, there lived in a fisher folk's village on the Inland Sea of Nippon, near where the modern port of Tadotsu stands, a young mother. Her neighbors knew her under the name of Tatsu.

Her husband was a rogue. One morning he woke up with a fine idea of chasing a picturesque mist which looked very much like a maiden's fluttering kimono, to the world's end. He took his boat and melted from sight on the other side of the waves. He left the young mother with her babe.

The huge torii of the guardian god of the fishermen's village shadowed her little home with a thatched roof. When he left her she devoted all her days to her baby, and every morning she went into the open court of the shrine to serve the guardian deity.

**A**ND one night, as in a dream, there came to her a great light. Presently there stood in front of her a presence so bright and so imposing that she was afraid. She was very sure—she did not know why—that it was the presence of the guardian deity, whom all her neighbors worshipped. She fell upon her face, low on the matted floor. The voice, the like of which she had never heard before, came to her and said:

"Take heart, woman. I am your neighbor whom you are serving every morning. I see that you are a good woman; I hold a reward for all good women. When the earth shall be much smaller than it is to-day and when the Sun shall have lost some of its youth, there shall come a great day for your native land. Then shall a hairy monster from the snow clutch its claws into the throat of this land of the gods; and the children of Yamato shall take to the sword. There shall be great weeping among the children of men. The storm

shall shake the earth. That shall be a great day for the Home Land of the Sun.

"On that day, I shall raise a man. He shall be of your own blood, of your flesh and bones. He shall smite the monster from the earth. And the edge of his sword shall be tempered by the gods. And he shall be great in the land of your birth."

The voice had melted away, but the little mother dared not lift her head. When the light broke on the following day and her boy opened his eyes, she told him all about it. It was the mid-winter day of many, many centuries ago.

**I**N the Province of Sanuki, in the opening days of the year of grace 1904, under the shadow of the torii of the guardian deity, there lived an old lady—Grandma Ikeda, the village people called her. The Ikeda family had always been a modest one, without pretension and without great wealth. Always, their homestead stood in the very shadow of the torii of the guardian deity of the village.

The Ikeda family, however, was known throughout the land. As long as history could remember, there never had been a time when this singular family had not been represented by one or more of its sons among the fighting force of the Land of the Gods. That was the reason why the people miles around the little village had heard the name of Ikeda. The family was also

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**T**HEN came the closing days of the thirty-sixth year of the enlightened age of Meiji, 1903. With the baby days of the year of grace 1904 was born within the hearts of the men of Nippon a determination to fight for the honor of the sun-round flag, and also for the very life of the land of the gods.

The reserves were called out. Ikeda Taro simply brought out a tray and placed upon it a couple of tiny cups filled with clear cold water. He laid it before his grandmother. Facing her across the tray, he sat down, and bowing to the matted floor before her he said: "August grandmother, you have heard the call of the country. I am a child of the man who gave his life for the flag. I am going. Before I start honor me with the exchange of the cups of cold water, according to the old custom of samurai departing to war—to the war of defending the very life of my country and the Emperor."

The old lady gave her grandson a beautiful smile—yes, she knew all about it; she was quite ready. All she wanted was that her little boy would not forget whose son he was; what ancient blood it was that warmed his young veins.

**T**HE Nippon Government was suffering from the embarrassment of riches. Such a number of able and competent men offered themselves both for the army and the navy—but especially for the navy—that there was no possibility of accepting anything like a goodly percentage of the ambitious young applicants. It rejected Ikeda Taro on the ground of being the sole support of his aged grandmother. A number of officers whose duty it was to examine and select the best fitted and qualified for the service were the old friends of his father. They knew him very well; they knew how well qualified he was to claim the service. They took pains to explain to him, therefore, that it was not because he was lacking in ability or training that they were rejecting him, but solely on the ground of his being the only support of the declining years of his aged grandmother.

"Do you not see," they said to him, pointing out an overwhelming number of applicants, "there are a number of good fellows to answer for the luster of the sun-round flag on sea; and is not filial piety the foundation of all virtues?"

He went to his Sanuki home, beside the dimplings of the Inland Sea, not over happy—no; nevertheless quite content—"dear, precious grandmother! What could she do without me?" And at home under the ancient thatched roof, he told his grandmother the story of his rejection. The old lady said nothing. She heard the story of her grandchild with a drooping head.

"Yes," she said at last, as if she were sighing, "Yes, that is very good. I would have missed you, oh, so much! My child, you have made me so very, very happy in my fading days."

**T**HE next morning—which had all the quiet and uneventful appearance of any other day in his life—he awoke rather early, made fire, and while the rice was steaming he went into the courtyard of the shrine of the guardian deity of the village.

After sweeping the court he went back to the cottage. When the breakfast was upon the tray he took it to the room of his grandmother. He called her and, almost at the same time, as was his wont, he gently pulled open the shoji.

The sight before him made him pause. There was no sign of a bed. In the middle of the room, to be sure, there was his grandmother, in a strange posture, which looked as if she were making a profound bow to some one. Her forehead was upon the mat.

Ikeda Taro approached her. Then he saw the naked blade of a dagger which the women of the Samurai class used to carry in the braver days of Nippon. And upon the blade Taro saw a stain clinging to him like the fading tinsel of a morning glory.

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famous for its piety—from the time of the gods, the village saying had it, the family had been the servant of the guardian deity of the fishermen's village.

Grandma Ikeda was drifting down life's slope on the other side of seventy-three. At the time of the Chino-Nippon war her son was on the Hihei in the thick of the historic battle of the Yalu. And her son never came back to her from the silence of the Yellow Sea. That was her only boy.

Ikeda Taro, her grandson, and the one boy whom her son had left with her, was not quite fourteen. Like his father before him, he was placed in a naval academy as he came to age. Two years before, however, he finished his course at the school and went back to his grandmother.

She was so feeble that without his constant help it was very difficult for her to manage to provide for even the simplest needs of life. So the grandson stayed with his feeble grandmother, and many a Spring day the villagers of Sakamoto were treated to as beautiful a sight as human eye is permitted to enjoy. On the strong arm of her grandchild, well-knit, hardy and erect from military training, the boy presented a brave picture with his grandmother clinging to him like the fading tinsel of a morning glory.